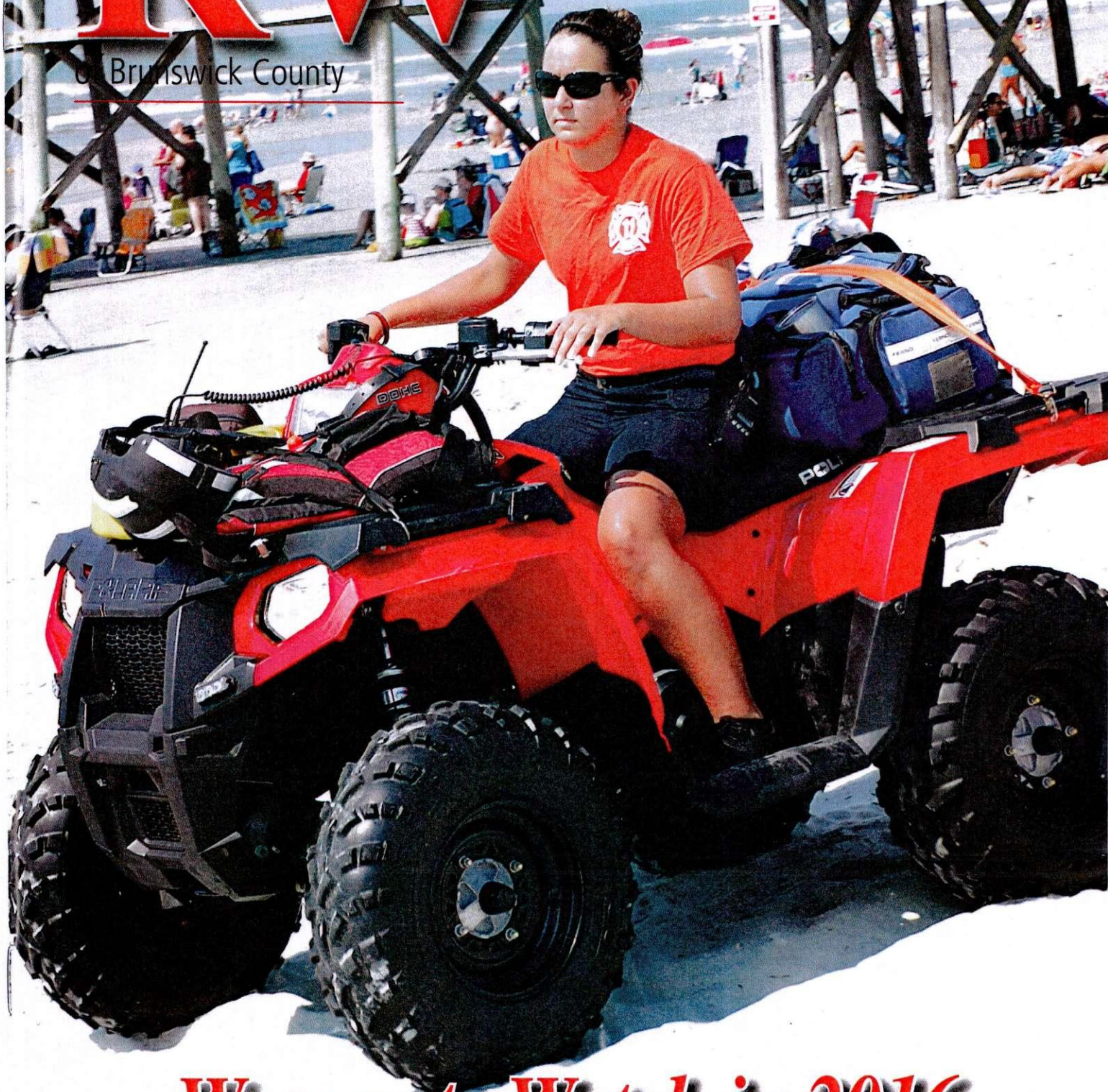


The Real Women

# RW

of Brunswick County



## *Women to Watch in 2016*

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STAFF PHOTOS BY LAURA LEWIS

Alexis Yoho has found her niche as the first full-time paid female firefighter for the Sunset Beach Fire Department.

*Alexis Yoho*

## First full-time female firefighter ignites career at Sunset Beach

BY LAURA LEWIS  
Staff Writer

**S**he grew up watching her dad fight fires, and now she's a firefighter, too.

Earlier this year, 21-one-year-old Alexis Yoho became the first full-time paid female firefighter for the Sunset Beach Fire Department.

She also happens to be the youngest daughter of Ocean Isle Beach Fire Chief Robert Yoho, who wielded influence over her during her growing-up years whether he knew it or not.

"Since I was little, I wanted to get into (firefighting)," Alexis said, seated recently at Sunset Beach Station 1 on Shoreline Drive West.

Hours earlier, she had begun a 24-hour shift that started at 7 a.m. and would conclude at 7 a.m. the next day. That's the full-time shift schedule for



Alexis Yoho patrols Sunset Beach this past summer.

firefighters at the department — 24 hours on, followed by 48 hours off before starting the next 24-hour shift.

She learned by example growing up, observing her dad and what he did — "just watching," she said. "Every time

he'd leave to go on a call or something, I'd always want to go or watch him leave."

At any opportunity, she'd observe the firefighters during training. She'd sit in the truck and watch them.

"I probably asked a lot of

questions when I was younger. I can't remember, but I'm sure I did," Alexis said.

Chief Yoho didn't discourage his daughter from the profession.

"He was a little worried at first when I was younger, but he was always really supportive about it," Alexis said.

As soon as she was old enough, she started taking classes, gleaning all the basic certifications she needed and, to this day, training whenever she can.

At 16, she became a junior firefighter at Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department.

"That's where I started out," said Alexis, who still has a part-time job with Shallotte Point and another one with Brunswick County Emergency Medical Services.

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She supposes the appeal of the work is the adrenaline.

"But it's also being able to help the community in their time of distress or need — to be there," Alexis said.

She grew up in Ocean Isle Beach, where she was home-schooled by her mom, Pam.

About two-and-a-half years ago, at 18, Alexis also started out as a part-time firefighter with Sunset Beach, going full-time this past April.

Her shift typically begins transitioning with firefighters on the previous shift, when they'll exchange information about anything they need to know. Then she and fellow staffers on her shift perform fire-truck and equipment checks, along with assorted household duties required around the station and whatever else needs to be done.

"We just got back from changing smoke detectors," Alexis said during one 24-hour "on" shift. "We do that for the community, change batteries and stuff."

They're on hand to handle whatever may come up, including fire and medical emergencies — "whenever the pager goes off — you never know," Alexis said. "We

run medical calls, too — first responders. We get quite a few medical calls, wrecks and fires."

On-duty firefighters are allowed to sleep during their shift.

"We have our own rooms, and we have our pagers on," Alexis said. "We'll get calls during the night, so we make sure our pagers are turned on."

There's also an alarm system in the department that goes off. Between that and the pagers, "it wakes us up," she said.

Her dad "doesn't mind" her career choice.

"I was the baby of three girls, and I was the only one that followed in his footsteps," Alexis said.

As for her male colleagues, "they've all been real good," she said. "They've taken me in and helped me learn. They haven't treated me any different than anyone else."

When they're not responding to calls or performing routine station duties, they're often busy training, including with other departments.

"We're always training," said Alexis, who lives in Supply now. In her off time, she enjoys "lazy days" off-shift, going to the beach and out with friends.

"She's one of our hardest workers here



Alexis is the daughter of Ocean Isle Beach Fire Chief Robert Yoho.

at the fire department," said Sunset Beach Assistant Fire Chief Richard Childres. "She worked for a while on our part-time list. As soon as we had an opening, we hired her. We have nothing but positive to say. She's a go-getter."

Being female doesn't feel that unusual in a career that is slowly garnering more women, including other part-timers at the Sunset Beach station, Alexis said.

"It never really bothered me," she said. "I kind of went right into it."



STAFF PHOTOS BY LAURA LEWIS

Alexis Yoho puts on her seat belt before starting the fire engine at the Sunset Beach Fire Department.

#### NEW PROGRAMS

# THINK Education



### Spring Registration:

Wednesday & Thursday

January 6<sup>TH</sup> & 7<sup>TH</sup>

### Short on Time?

At Brunswick Community College, you have the option to enroll in sixteen (16), twelve (12), eight (8) or four (4) week sessions.

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